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NOTES.

EXCAVATION OF A CHRISTIAN PALACE IN ROME.

We have received from the well-known leaders in Christian archæology, Comm. J. B. de Rossi and Enrico Stevenson, an appeal for help to carry on a most important excavation in Rome, unique in its interest, which has come to a stand-still from lack of funds. It is the first time that paintings of a specifically Christian character have been found in a private house; they had hitherto been confined to the Catacombs. The historical character and magnificence of the house itself add to the value of the results to be attained by its complete recovery. I will gladly receive and forward any sums addressed to me, and appeal to those interested in the early Christian Church to help make up a purse of \$500. A. L. Frothingham, Jr., Managing Editor, Princeton, N. J.

Sir:—In 1887 and 1888, excavations have been carried on at Rome, on the Coelian hill, under the basilica of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, resulting in one of the most notable discoveries ever made in the field of Christian archæology. In some respects, it is even more important than the famous discovery of the subterranean Basilica of San Clemente with its numerous frescos, to the recovery of which many foreigners of all nations contributed. The present discovery is that of a house which must have been one of the most magnificent of ancient Rome, in which, instead of the usual decorative frescos well-known from the examples in Pompeii and Rome itself, the walls are covered with cycles of symbolic Christian paintings, no longer hidden in the subterranean cells and passages of the Catacombs, but used for the decoration of the walls and ceilings of the rooms in which lived Saints John and Paul, martyrs under Julian the Apostate. In fact, this is the first known example of a Christian palace in classic Rome. The entire ground-floor, containing more than fifteen rooms, is still in a good state of preservation. Since the twelfth century, the palace has been buried under the remains of the ruined early basilica: the apartment where the two martyrs were put to death, and where, being buried, their tomb was long visited. This place was turned into a *Confessio*; and, shortly after, three other martyrs were put to death there, and their *Confessio* is decorated with contemporary frescos representing the tragedy. Such frescos are unique in early Christian art. The excavations are under the direction of Comm. G. B. de Rossi and Padre Germano, who began them. Here, as at San Clemente, it is necessary to support the church by piers and vaults, before proceeding to excavate, and this expense makes it necessary to appeal for help to all lovers of ancient monuments and Church history.

Dr. A. L. Frothingham, editor of the American Journal of Archæology, is authorized to receive subscriptions and to transmit them direct to Comm. G. B. de Rossi.

Comm. G. B. DE ROSSI ;	} <i>for the Collegium Cultorum Martyrum.</i>
P. GERMANO, Passionist ;	
Mons. DE WAAL, President ;	
Prof. ENRICO STEVENSON, Secretary ;	
Prof. ORAZIO MARUCCHI ;	
Prof. MARIANO ARMELLINI ;	

THE EXISTENCE OF AMERICA KNOWN EARLY IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA.

In 708 A. D., Jacob of Edessa, the famous Syrian ecclesiastic, encyclopaedist, and writer, wrote his work entitled *Hexameron*. Attention has been called to its importance by the Abbé Martin in two papers published in the *Journal Asiatique* (1888). One point is of especial interest. He remarks (p. 455): "I have already said that this learned Syrian had some idea of the existence of a vast continent between Spain and Tingitana, on one side, and China. This appears from his remark concerning *an unknown land situated to the East of China*, but he speaks of it still more clearly in treating another subject, that of the dimensions of the earth. Jacob says: *The length (of the earth) is measured beginning at the Western Ocean ; at the gulf placed outside Gadir (Gades?), an island placed in the 5th degree of longitude, at the Western extremity of the inhabited earth. It is said (lit. written) that in front of Spain and the columns of Herakles, between them and the country of the Chinese, which is to the East of India, there is an UNKNOWN AND UNINHABITED LAND.*"

It is evident, then, that rumors of the existence of America had reached the Syrians, before the time of Jacob of Edessa. Whence could these rumors have come? Possibly from China. It is well known that the Syrian missionaries, especially those belonging to the Nestorian sect, spread over the Far-East and had numerous settlements in India and in China, along the seacoast. This had been an accomplished fact for over two centuries before Jacob of Edessa ; and, even at the present day, memorials of their presence are found in China. Communications between the Far-East and Syria were therefore likely to be not infrequent ; and these countries seem to have been better known at that time, than they were later, to Arabian travellers and geographers. These facts suggest the interesting enquiries, whether this rumor of an unknown continent reached Syria from China ; whether, at this early time, the Chinese were acquainted with the coast of Alaska ; and whether their knowledge of America went any further.

A. L. F., JR.